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ABSTRACT

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Career Interventions That Create Hope

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Abstract

Temporal experience structures how people conceptualize their careers and enact vocational behavior. Optimal career success and satisfaction follow from an experience of time characterized by an orientation to a future that is densely populated with events clearly connected to present behavior. Career interventions may empower individuals by facilitating the temporal perspective, differentiation, and integration that sustain occupational achievement and career satisfaction. These interventions create hope when they make the future important, cause the future to seem real, and construct pathways that lead from the present to goal attainment. A hopeful temporal experience prompts the self-conscious awareness of a subjective career and engenders the planful attitudes and planning competencies that are critical to career decision making and adjustment.

Career Interventions That Create Hope

This conference addresses one major question: How may counselors empower individuals through career development. In reading the titles of the content sessions, I discern at least two substantive answers to this question. First, career interventions can improve decision-making skills and facilitate life planning. Career interventions that ease choice behavior help people design their futures. Second, career interventions can increase self-control and willpower. Interventions that enhance self-efficacy, focus causal attributions on effort, and strengthen the need for achievement allow people to believe that they control their futures. My presentation offers a third answer to this question. Teaching people that they have a career empowers individuals. Career interventions that make individuals self-conscious about their vocational past, present, and future help people believe that they have a future and enlarge their time perspective (Matulef, Warman, & Brock, 1964; Savickas, in press).

It is easy to overlook the fact that career planning requires individuals to know that they have careers. Everyone has a career but not everyone knows that they do. Hughes explained this paradox when he distinguished between **objective** and **subjective** career. He wrote that "a career consists, objectively, of a series of status and clearly defined offices ... Subjectively, a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees his [or her] life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his [or her] various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him [or her]" (Hughes, 1958, p. 63). Thus an individual's objective career is externally observable because it consists of the series of positions occupied during her or his life cycle. In contrast, an individual's subjective career is not

externally observable because it consists of self-conscious thoughts about the vocational past, present, and future. Those people who do not think about their vocational past, present, and future lack a subjective career.

A subjective career emerges from a certain temporal experience, that is, beliefs about and attitudes toward time. In the career culture of the middle class, a future orientation conditions vocational behavior. Moreover, the career culture views future orientation as the main ingredient in mental health. The modal career counseling client seeks to reduce anxiety about the future. Most career clients want the counselor to help them take responsibility for their lives and design their occupational futures. Career interventions empower these clients to increase their sense of self-efficacy, use decision-making skills, or form career plans. Individuals who orient themselves to the past or the present often lack awareness of a subjective career. Because they do not envision a subjective career, they rarely seek career counseling. Individuals who view time differently than the middle class must learn how the career culture experiences time before they can value career counseling and benefit from traditional career interventions.

Individuals may easily learn the time perspective of the career culture once they believe that time is a social fact, not a physical reality. To adapt to a culture, an individual must learn how that culture views time. Cultures invent time to structure existence and coordinate social interaction. Because time is an abstraction, people must conceive time rather than perceive it. Enculturation involves learning how the culture conceptualizes time and uses time to structure life roles. Individuals who do not yet know the how time is viewed and used by the middle class career culture in the United States may not have a subjective career or, if they have one, may view it so

differently from the dominant occupational culture that they experience vocational failure and dissatisfaction.

What temporal experience underlies vocational success and satisfaction in the occupational culture of the United States and how can subjective career be taught? To answer this question, I have been studying the psychological experience of time as it relates to career development. Although Super clearly identified time perspective as a prerequisite for career maturity, counselors have not paid much attention to time perspective. In examining the literature about time, one can see why. Similar concepts have different names while concepts with the same name have different operational definitions. To examine the role of temporal experience in career development, I first linguistically explicated and operationally defined a coherent set of career-related temporal constructs (Ringle & Savickas, 1983; Savickas, Silling, & Schwartz, 1984; Wolf & Savickas, 1985; Savickas, 1986). For the purpose of career intervention, I use three organizing constructs: perspective, differentiation, and integration. The following three sections of the current paper describe how the three constructs relate to career development and how each is defined, assessed, and modified.

Time Perspective

Time perspective refers to how individuals view and orient themselves to time. Time can be viewed as an ally, enemy, harasser, or irrelevancy; this in turn makes time seem ascending, fast, slow, running out, and so on. In the career culture, time imagery relates to achievement motivation. For example, Knapp and Garbutt (1958) concluded from their research that "individuals of high achievement motivation possess a distinctive attitude toward time reflected in their preference for time metaphors involving precipitant haste

(p. 432)." To assess view of time, career educators and counselors may ask students and clients to complete the following sentence: "Time is like _____." Individuals may respond with metaphors such as time is like money, a race, a frozen rope, or an old African tree. The counselor may then consider whether the metaphor has movement and direction. In the career culture, metaphors that express directional movement facilitate occupational success and satisfaction.

In addition to a view of time, an individual's time perspective also includes an orientation to time. Temporal orientation refers to which time zone has primary relevance for contemporary decision making. Pearsall (1987) gave a clear example of socialization processes that orient individuals to time.

> Some of the parents were teaching that there is only now. No future, no past, just the immediate here and now was the lesson taught by 'cut it out' punctuated by a slap on the child's rear end. That the future is all important and should determine your present behavior at all costs was being taught by the parent yelling across the room to her child removing a fish from the lukewarm water of the fish tank: 'Don't do things like that, or you will never do well on your test later.' Another mother based her interventions on the past and tradition as she firmly sat her daughter beside he and scolded, 'Your grandfather would never have said something like that.' Present, past, and future were modeled within the same room, all at the same time. Our own view of time and its impact on our wellness was largely learned through these same child-parent interactions (p. 236).

Temporal orientation is a fundamental value all societies (Kluckhohn, 1961). The career culture considers future orientation as the prime precursor of mental health and career achievement. A future orientation enables one to delay gratification and work for tomorrow. A future orientation increases anxiety and, in turn, occupational commitment because work is outgrowth of

anxiety about survival in the future. Individuals who orient themselves toward the past or the present encounter predictable problems in adapting to and coping with the career culture. For example, a present orientation disposes individuals to impulsive behavior whereas a future orientation sustains the will to delay gratification (Klineberg, 1968).

Counselors may assess temporal orientation with Cottle and Peck's (1969) lines test which presents a horizontal line to individuals and asks them to view it as their lifeline. The left end of the line is labeled "B" for birth and the right end is labeled "D" for death. Individuals are instructed to draw two vertical lines that divide the line into three segments: the first segment represents their conception of the amount of time in their past, the second their present, and the third their future. The largest segment is interpreted as the time zone which they are oriented toward. The assessment may then be turned into an intervention using procedures described by Oleksy-Ojikutu (1986). Cottle's (1976) circles test may be used in a similar way.

Career interventions typically work to create or reinforce a future orientation by making the future seem important and by creating anxiety about what one will do in the future. Counselors who wish to design interventions that condition clients to view time as directional movement and to orient themselves to the future will find many effective interventions in futures curricula (Toffler, 1974). Tips about counseling techniques relative to present versus future time orientation are provided by Langer and Zwerling (1980).

Time Differentiation

A time perspective that moves forward and orients one to tomorrow makes the future <u>important</u>. Temporal differentiation makes the future feel <u>real</u>.

Temporal differentiation refers to the **density** and **extension** of events within time zones. The more events that populate a time zone, the more that time zone seems real to an individual. An individual who densely populates the future with anticipated events which extend far into the horizon has a schema ready for career planning. A differentiated future provides a meaningful context for setting personal goals. (Interestingly, counselor competence relates to future extension according to Sattler, 1964). While a future orientation may create anxiety, future differentiation alleviates anxiety by envisioning the future and ones place in it.

Just naming anticipated events helps people to adapt. Labels for experience reduce anxiety. Anxiety is greatest when we know something is going to happen but we have no idea what will happen. "Naming the animals" (as was required to adapt in the Garden of Eden) turns free floating anxiety into a circumscribed fear that can be thought about, discussed, anticipated, and prepared for. For example Kubler-Ross' stages of dying give structure and meaning to a traumatic experience. With her metaphorical stages as a tool, people can cope better. Some individuals even learn to "live with" rather than "die from". The same is true for career development. Anticipating events and then modeling the future using these events enables an individual to envision possible selves embedded in that future.

Assessing an individuals time differentiation can be informal. For example, counselors may ask students to write down the important events they expect will occur during the school year. Students who write more events and who anticipate events farther into the future can be expected to achieve higher grades and more satisfaction with school. To more formally assess density, counselors may count the number of responses that an individual gives

to two questions: "Who will you be?" and "What will you do?" (Kastenbaum 1961). To assess extension, counselors may determine the difference between actual age and the most distant event written in response to the Open Events Test (Wallace, 1956). The Open Events Test appears in Appendix A. Stein, Sarbin, and Kulik (1968) devised a more structured measure of temporal extension called the Future Events Test (FET). The FET, as modified by Tolor, Brannigan, & Murphy (1970) appears in Appendix B.

Anticipatory guidance may be the preferred mode of intervention to increase temporal differentiation. In pediatric medicine, telling new parents what to expect of their child during the next three months is called anticipatory guidance. Anticipatory guidance about their own lives is an excellent career development intervention for adolescents and adults because it enhances their adaptability. People who can predict the general form their lives will take can adapt better or, as Super pointed out in 1957, they can work to defeat the predictions they dislike.

Anticipatory guidance for career development may take the form of discussing life stages. Helping people learn the course of a typical life enables them to think about the progress of their own lives. I have found that media presentations make good discussion stimuli for this type of career intervention. Many popular movies deal with life stages. I have used excerpts from movies such as Saturday Night Fever, Down to the Sea in Ships, and Peggy Sue Got Married. Art and music also provide appropriate stimuli. For example, Thomas Cole's paintings that deal with time's passing and it's continuity (e.g., "Voyage of Life" series) prompt discussion about life stages as does Grieg's "Lyric Pieces", an musical diary of his life. A videotape that presents Marcel Marceau's mime of Shakespeare's seven ages of human

beings similarly focuses discussion on life stages.

Rather than using media excerpts to stimulate guided discussion about life stages, counselors may use resources that directly teach about life stages. For example, an animated movie called "Everybody Rides the Carousel" teaches Eriskon's model of the life cycle. Reading and reflecting upon Sheehy's (1976) Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life also facilitates future differentiation.

Teaching about career stages, as opposed to life stages, is also effective. The Adult Career Concerns Inventory (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988) provides a superb lesson plan for teaching individuals or groups about careers and the developmental tasks which they may encounter in the near and far future.

Career counseling involves helping people create, articulate, and enact their dreams. Once an individual envisions the future in general, she or he can dream of the personal future. Thus, a powerful intervention is to help people daydream about their futures. As noted by a perfume commercial, dreams are where we design our lives. Research suggests that occupational daydreams may be the best predictor of what people will do years later (Touchton & Magoon, 1977). Note that the first section of Holland's Self-Directed Search deals with occupational daydreams. Techniques like guided imagery (Skovholt & Hoenninger, 1974; Skovholt, Morgan, & Negron-Cunningham, 1989) and future autobiographies (Maw, 1982) in which people imagine themselves in the future systematically use the power of dreams. Given these initial dreams as scripts, counselor can work to help clients further differentiate their dreams by making them denser and extending them further. Counselors may also work with the dreams to examine the goals in these

daydreams and then help clients shape their aspirations into more achievable, believable, and concrete goals.

Time Integration

Perspective makes the future important, differentiation enhances goal setting, and integration enables planning. Temporal integration refers to the sense of connectedness among events across time zones. Integration of time zones includes continuity among the past, present, and future as well as optimism about the achievability of goals. Continuity denotes the cognitive structure sustaining planning skill and optimism denotes the conative disposition sustaining a planful attitude.

Continuity among then, now, and when provides the cognitive schema for realistic planning. As long as life is viewed as discontinuous, each experience is new and unique. Discontinuity reduces predictability and makes planning illusive. When life is viewed as an unbroken thread, individuals can become aware of enduring themes and patterns in life, strengthen their sense of identity, and choose activities that require a perseverance. They can learn that prior planning prevents poor performance and follow the three rules for success: prepare, prepare, and prepare.

Optimism that present behavior can be organized to achieve future goals moves enactment of plans. Integration provides hope that goals can be achieved when an individual uses the interconnectedness of life as a basis for constructing successful pathways for goal attainment and begins to experience and shape the future by acting in the present to implement the plans. Hope implies goals accompanied by specific plans.

Sense of continuity may be measured with the 20-item Long-Term Personal Direction Scale (Wessman, 1973). Optimism can be measured with the 8-item

Achievability of Future Goals Scale (Heimberg, 1961) or the 12-item Hope Scale (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Gibb, Yoshinobu, Langelle, Harney, , Halleran, & Irving, 1989).

Interventions to increase integration address planning attitudes and competencies. These interventions, as a group, help clients map their future, plan routes to get there, and commit themselves to the journey. Plans bridge the gap between knowledge and action (Miller, Galanter, & Pribram, 1960, p. 10). We make plans to reach some inner image of what we imagine the future to be like. Shostrom's (1968) advice to therapist holds equally well for career counselors: "The therapist must attempt, in effect, to bring the patient to a time competent orientation which ties him [or her] to the present, with past memories serving as significant learning experiences and future goals tied to here-and-now activity" (p. 357). Hopkins (1979) described a brief exercise that shows clients how to overlap the present and the future time zones.

> I list five things that I need to do by Monday (these tend to be urgent) and then five things that I want to do during my lifetime (these tend to be important). My next task is to combine the lists into one imperative list of things both important and urgent. I can get at a big important thing by making a small part of it urgent (p. 2).

Tiedeman's paradigm of purposeful action lends itself well to designing interventions that create temporal integration and form vocational plans. Tiedeman defined career as the imposition of direction into vocational behavior. Tiedeman and Field (1965) suggested that counselors help clients compare and contrast their currently experienced situation to their currently desired situation. Then, based on the differences between the two, devise a plan to move toward where they would like to be. Acting contingently on plans makes for purposeful action directed toward goal attainment.

Counselors with an interest in life planning (in contrast to vocational guidance) typically use interventions that enhance temporal integration. For example, Hansen's (1989) Integrative Life Planning Workshop includes counseling materials and methods that address emerging life patterns and enhance temporal integration. Also, Brown's (1988) Life Planning Workshop for High School Students includes several microinterventions that create and reinforce temporal integration.

An assessment method used to examine the quality of occupational plans in achievement motivation research may be modified into a career intervention. First have clients write a description of a career goal. Second, help them make a plan to attain that career goal by writing 15 steps (one per page) that move them from today to goal attainment. Then modify and develop the plan by making the steps contingent, revising the details so they are specific and comprehensive, and building in alternatives. Additional ideas for interventions to facilitate temporal integration appear in the personality psychology literature. For examples consult Emmon's (1986) work on personal strivings and Frese, Stewart, and Hannover's (1987) work on planfulness and action styles.

Conclusion

Interventions that heighten an individual's self-consciousness about her or his subjective career also make the future important, cause the future to seem real, and create hope that goals can be attained. Teaching individuals to have a subjective career helps to shape their perspective on time, differentiate time into meaningful units, and connect events along a time continuum. The planful attitudes and planning skills that result from these interventions may generalize to empower individuals in other life roles.

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APPENDIX A

OPEN EVENTS TEST[1]

First, list ten things (or events) you imagine doing or which may happen to you in your future. These do not have to be in the order they might happen.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Second, in the box provided beside each event, write the age you think you will be when this event occurs.

Third, put a checkmark in front of those events over which you have some control. Those not marked will be events which may happen to you but you don't have control over them.

[1] Wallace, M. (1956). Future time perspective in schizophrenia. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 52, 240-245.

APPENDIX B

FUTURE EVENTS TEST[1]

Next to each item below mark the future age at which you believe the event will happen to you. If you believe it will never happen to you, please write NEVER in the blank.

1. Finish college _____
2. Visit a foreign country _____
3. Have a new car _____
4. Get a job you really want _____
5. Get married _____
6. Have an auto accident _____
7. Die _____
8. Buy a home _____
9. Get a ticket for fast driving _____
10. Move to another city _____
11. Own a gun or a rifle _____
12. Get drunk _____
13. Get rich _____
14. Be a strong person _____
15. Have a first child _____
16. Be hospitalized _____
17. Fly an airplane _____
18. Own a boat _____
19. Graduate from high school _____
20. Retire from a job _____
21. Take a long vacation _____
22. Go to jail _____
23. Become a grandfather/grandmother _____
24. A friend will die _____
25. Be satisfied with yourself _____
26. Win lots of money _____
27. Get a scholarship _____
28. Enjoy life your own way _____
29. Have sporty clothes _____
30. Be a hero _____
31. Your first child gets married _____
32. Be a big-timer _____
33. Have a flashy apartment _____
34. Become a great athlete _____
35. Be some kind of leader _____
36. Be famous _____

[1] Tolor, A., Brannigan, G., & Murphy, V. (1970). Psychological distance, future time perspective, and internal-external expectancy. Journal of Personality Assessment, 34, 283-294.

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